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Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution and resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004), providing information on compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict.[1] In accordance with the Council's request, the report also includes information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans (called for in paragraph 5 (a) of resolution 1539 (2004)); information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers; and findings and recommendations of an independent review on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the report covers compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals.

II. Current issues of concern

3. Although progress has been made with respect to the protection of children in a number of situations of armed conflict covered in my previous report (A/59/695-S/2005/72), new situations have arisen that are of great concern. The recent

06-57795 (E) 151106

escalation of violence in the Middle East, in Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, has resulted in thousands of child victims. Concerted efforts by all parties must be undertaken to mitigate and prevent further violations through dialogue and active participation of all stakeholders interested in the protection of children.

4. New evidence suggests that the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations are beginning to "migrate" within regions. The movement of rebel groups across borders to prey upon vulnerable children needs further attention and adequately developed monitoring expertise to effectively address the problem. Of particular concern are the Mano River and Great Lakes regions of Africa. Another preoccupying phenomenon is the use of children by mercenaries and mercenary groups. Though adequate data has yet to be gathered systematically, reports from the field indicate that this is a growing concern.

5. Insecurity and a lack of access to affected areas by the United Nations often preclude access to information, especially when non-State actors operate in isolated areas. For example, insurgents and rebel groups in Iraq and Afghanistan operate in a clandestine manner and often in inaccessible areas, posing a challenge in obtaining evidence on recruitment practices and other grave violations against children.

III. Other challenges

6. In other situations, such as Northern Ireland, there are still concerns about the existence of youth wings of paramilitary organizations, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association, which continue to engage persons under 18 years of age.

7. In the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, there has been no specific information on the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups. However, the United Nations has received information from non-governmental sources that children have been subject to abductions and hostage taking by illegal armed groups.

8. The widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons in conflict areas continues to be a major factor in enabling the recruitment of child soldiers. These weapons are simple to operate and carry, therefore easily placed in the hands of children who can be quickly trained to use them.

9. Recent experience with regard to demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration points to the need to recognize the special concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups. This should be taken into consideration when developing and implementing policies, programmes and action plans.

IV. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations being committed against children

10. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from November 2005 to September 2006. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task

Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, peacekeeping missions and country teams, as well as with Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. United Nations country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams were the primary sources of the information contained in the report. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict initiated the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and facilitated this process in close collaboration with agencies, countries concerned and with the cooperation of United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams. This resulted in the set-up of country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, and the establishment of dialogue with a number of parties within the framework of the resolution towards the preparation and implementation of time-bound action plans to prevent and end the violations for which they are cited.

11. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II to the present report, and named in the body of my 2005 report, has been assessed with respect to whether the parties have engaged in dialogue with United Nations country-level task force teams or other United Nations field representatives as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) and whether through this dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes or the signing of peace agreements, they have developed action plans to end the use of child soldiers. Progress made by the parties is also assessed with respect to whether they have ceased recruiting and using child soldiers, and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children.

12. The present report does not seek to make any legal determination as to whether situations included herein are or are not armed conflicts within the context of the Geneva Conventions and the additional protocols thereto, nor does it prejudge the legal status of the non-State parties that might be involved in these situations. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of concern, rather than seeking to define "armed conflict" from a legal perspective.

A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council

Developments in Afghanistan

13. There has been a significant increase in violence and attacks by insurgents, including Taliban militias and other armed groups, Afghan armed forces operations and international military forces present in the country throughout 2005. There have been isolated reports, including statements by United States military officials that Taliban forces have recruited and used children in combat. However, in the reporting period, the United Nations country teams could not obtain specific and reliable information on which illegal armed groups may have continued to use children owing to a lack of access to affected areas. No commitments have yet been made by any of these illegal armed groups to end this practice. There have also been no reported cases of recruitment of children into the Afghan national army.

14. A growing concern is the marked increase of attacks against schools, attributed mainly to insurgents, including Taliban militias and other armed groups, which has spread from the south and south-eastern regions to all the provinces. Since late 2005, incidents have included the burning or bombing of schools, the assassination of principals, teachers and officials and threats to students. These attacks have led to the closure of all schools in six districts and the closure of a substantive number of schools in 10 other districts of the southern region. From January to July 2006, over 100 violent incidents against schools, teachers or pupils were recorded, compared with 60 during the whole of 2005; and 105,000 children in the southern region were reported to be denied access to education because of insecurity. It is also reported that ideological opposition to the education of girls appears to motivate some of these attacks.

15. In the southern region, including Panjwai district and the Hilmand province, civilians are increasingly falling victim to an upsurge in fighting between Taliban insurgents and Government and United States-led Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. A particularly egregious incident on 11 April 2006 resulted in the death of six children and the wounding of 14 other people when a rocket fired by Taliban elements exploded in the Salabagh School in Asadabad, Kunar. On 22 May 2006, the aerial bombardment by the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan of a residential area of Taloqan village in Panjwai district, where alleged Taliban were presumed to be in hiding resulted in the deaths of approximately 35 civilians, including at least 9 confirmed children. Children have also been injured in incidents involving suicide bombers targeting foreign military forces.

16. In parallel to the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, a United Nations-backed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiative, a child-specific demobilization and reintegration programme, is led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). As of July 2006, a total of 7,444 children associated with armed groups and affected by armed conflict had benefited from various reintegration support activities in 34 provinces of the country since the start of the programme in February 2004. Despite this progress, there are still some children who remain associated with local commanders in rural areas of the north, north-east and central regions.

Developments in Burundi

17. Progress has been made in the negotiations between the Government of Burundi and the armed rebel group, Forces nationales pour la libération (FNL/Agathon Rwasa). On 7 September 2006, a comprehensive ceasefire agreement was signed by the two parties in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania.

18. FNL continues to use children as combatants and for various logistical duties. Currently, hundreds of children are estimated to be active in the ranks of FNL. Ongoing recruitment of children by FNL continues to be a grave concern. From January to July 2006, 75 cases of recruitment of children into the two remaining factions of FNL, FNL/Agathon Rwasa and its splinter group, FNL/Jean Bosco Singayigaya, were reported in Bujumbura, Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Bubanza, Makamba, Rutana and Gitega Provinces. In the central Burundian town of Gitega, alleged recruitment by FNL was reported in Mutaho and Bugendana Communes. This is of particular concern as incidents of recruitment seem not only to have increased in number in the western part of Burundi, but are spreading to the centre

of the country. Owing to the sensitive nature of the information, and perceived danger to the lives of investigators and informers, it has been difficult to verify most reports of child recruitment. In addition, there are also reports of former FNL child soldier presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for which further investigations are in progress.

19. Since November 2005, 55 incidents of killing and 93 incidents of maiming of children by FNL or State authorities were reported to the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB). Some of them were killed during fighting between the Parti nationale pour la libération du peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-FNL and the national military, Force de la défense nationale (FDN). Other children were accused of participating in the rebellion and were arrested and tortured during their detention. In one case, four children were shot dead and two were injured during crossfire between FDN and FNL. In another case, in Muramvya, Bujumbura Rural, a 17-year-old student was found dead by the riverside, badly beaten, and his hands manacled. Two policemen were detained on charges of murder and were awaiting trial at the time of reporting. Violence between FDN and FNL escalated in June and July 2006, when at least eight children were killed by grenade explosions during fighting.

20. From November 2005 to July 2006, a total of 381 cases of detained children were reported to ONUB. Of those cases, 174 were related to the illegal detention of children by FDN, the Police nationale burundaise, Police de sécurité intérieure or the Service national de renseignement, including one nine-year-old child, being detained under suspicion of association with FNL. Some of the children from this group are used by the police and military as informers on FNL activities. Further, in mid-April 2006, the Government reopened Randa, a former demobilization centre in Bubanza Province, to house former FNL combatants who had either been captured or had surrendered. As of July 2006, there were a total of 454 detainees in Randa, of whom 25 were children between the ages of 15 and 17, including one girl. Many of these children remain traumatized from their experiences as FNL combatants. They have yet to be separated from former FNL adult combatants and officially recognized as former child soldiers, a prerequisite set by the Government, prior to receiving demobilization benefits and assistance. The status of these children will probably remain uncertain in the absence of a political agreement between the Government and FNL.

21. From November 2003 to July 2006, the demobilization, reintegration and prevention of recruitment of child soldiers programme supported by UNICEF and the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme led by the World Bank, demobilized and reintegrated 3,013 former child soldiers (Partis et mouvements politiques armés, 639; Forces armées burundaises, 885; Gardiens de la paix, 1,383; and Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, 106) to their families and communities. By June 2006, around 560 former child soldiers were back in school, and 1,800 were undertaking vocational training. A technical committee was formed in January 2006 to ensure the smooth handover of the child soldier project to the Government, integrating it with the Programme national de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration, implemented by the Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration. The technical committee is currently developing the procedures and mechanisms to demobilize former child soldiers from FNL. In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO), through its International

Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, has reintegrated 898 former child soldiers and has prevented the recruitment of 452 children at risk.

22. A child protection network was set up by UNICEF and its partners in December 2005. In August 2006, ONUB and UNICEF established a task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

Developments in Côte d'Ivoire

23. Children are associated with armed groups both in the Government-held territories and in areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles. There is currently no tangible evidence of children in the ranks of Government armed forces, Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). Children are however associated with armed militia groups close to the ruling party, Front populaire ivoirien (FPI). These militias, which include the Front de libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO), the Mouvement ivoirien de libération ouest de Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI), the Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé) and the Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO), are active in Government-controlled areas, notably in the West. The Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (FAFN) and other associated militia groups recognize that children are associated with their fighting forces. FAFN committed to an action plan in November 2005, and has made significant efforts in the implementation of the action plan. The FAFN efforts are acknowledged and its removal from the annex List will be considered in the next report, subject to a full implementation of the action plan.

24. Children are also often used in violent mass demonstrations by the Young Patriots, a pro-FPI party, in territories under the control of the Government, where they run the risk of being maimed or injured. For example, in January 2006, a mass demonstration in Guiglo, during which United Nations peacekeepers were also attacked, five Ivorians, including two children aged 14 and 16, were killed.

25. Although there are no official figures reflecting the true scale of grave sexual violence occurring, reliable reports establish that sexual violence is a prevalent security problem encountered by women and children, particularly in areas under FAFN control and in the Zone of Confidence. Further, children in detention in areas controlled by FAFN, where the administration of justice has collapsed, also remain exposed to grave abuses. FAFN issued a command order on 30 April 2006, triggered by the report of an alleged rape of a 14-year-old girl by FAFN elements in Bouaké, instructing an end to the detention of children pending restoration of the administration of justice.

26. A major cause for concern remains the seizure and forced occupation of schools by pro-Government militia. From 12 to 17 June 2006, over 100 members of the pro-Government militia group, the Groupement patriotique pour la paix (GPP), occupied a children's centre, the Centre d'ecôte pilot d'adjame in Abidjan. No children were found on the premises at the time of the seizure, although the incident had prevented children's access to the centre during this period.

27. During the reporting period, 327 children associated with fighting forces in areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles were demobilized, of whom 251 were officially handed over by FAFN. Currently, UNICEF facilitates the rehabilitation and reintegration of 1,194 former child soldiers and another 600 self-

demobilized children in Danané, who received military training from pro-FAFN Liberian fighters. Further, FLGO, MILOCI, APWé and UPRGO in West Guiglo released 400 children who are currently benefiting from rehabilitation programmes sponsored by UNICEF. However, reflecting a disturbing trend in the region, child protection partners in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have reported new and re-recruitments across the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire by armed groups active in Côte d'Ivoire.

28. On 20 September 2006, a task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was inaugurated in Côte d'Ivoire.

Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

29. Reports on the presence of children among Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) troops continue, notably in North Kivu. In April 2006, the presence of children among the 84th and the 85th non-integrated Brigades (former Mai-Mai) was registered (respectively 20 children with Colonel Akilimali and about 150 children with Colonel Sami). Reports of re-recruitment by FARDC also continue.

30. From January to June 2006, 22 children were reportedly killed or maimed by FARDC. For example, in May 2006, three children died as a result of a gunshot fired at close range by military forces of the 23rd Battalion of FARDC as they stormed into huts during clashes between FARDC and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in Nyamilima, Ruthsuru Territory, North Kivu. Child protection actors in North and South Kivu Provinces continue to register a number of abductions and recruitments of children by FDLR. In the same period, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) monitored a total of 61 children, allegedly victims of rape by members of FARDC. For example, on 27 March 2006, when moving to Nindja in South Kivu with his troops, FARDC Captain Indi-Mulenga allegedly took five girls with him.

31. International warrants for the arrest of Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebutsi were issued by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 21 December 2004, in connection with the Bukavu crisis of May/June 2004 that resulted in dozens of killings, rapes of adults and children, as well as widespread looting. However, until now, no steps have been taken to execute the warrants. In North Kivu, elements of the non-integrated 81st and 83rd brigades of FARDC considered loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda continue to harass, threaten and re-recruit children formerly associated with the military and now reunified with their families in parts of Masisi and Rutshuru territories. It is estimated that since July 2005, 70 children were recruited into Nkunda's ranks in the Masisi and Rutshuru territories. In February 2006, there were allegations of recruitment of about 20 children by Nkunda's forces in the Masisi area. Abductions and attempted abductions of 16 children in June and early July 2006 in North Kivu were reported. Thirteen of the children were abducted on 22 June 2006 near Kitchanga, Masisi territory, by dissident FARDC elements of the 83rd Battalion. The children, on their way to being reunified with their families, were recognized for having been formerly associated with that unit when their vehicle was stopped by military. Some of them escaped, but others were detained and released only after MONUC

intervention. Children reported that they had been submitted to severe beatings while in captivity.

32. In the course of 2005, the Forces armées populaires congolaises (FAPC) was completely disbanded through the Ituri disarmament and community reinsertion process and is consequently not openly active in Ituri. Hundreds of children associated with FAPC, including a relatively high number of girls, joined the Ituri process. A number of FAPC elements reportedly moved to Uganda in the course of the first half of 2005 in order to avoid the disarmament and community reinsertion process. There are no estimates of how many children remained in these groups.

33. Allegations of re-recruitment and use of children by the Front nationaliste et intégrationaliste (FNI) continued in 2005. On 20 November, MONUC received allegations that young people, including children, were being recruited by FNI commander Peter Karim Udaga, to reinforce his militia who were in conflict with FARDC in Mahagi. On 13 July 2006, following negotiations led by the Government with the facilitation of MONUC, Mr. Udaga agreed to join the disarmament and community reinsertion programme in Ituri. As of 25 July 2006, 87 children had been demobilized from the Udaga troops.

34. The Mai-Mai groups are mostly present in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga provinces. Most of them have now joined FARDC. In the course of 2005, a large presence of children in former Mai-Mai groups continued to be observed in North Kivu. In South Kivu the presence of children among former Mai-Mai groups also continued. At least 78 children (all boys) were demobilized from armed groups between March and May 2006; of these, 49 children associated with Major Abdou Panda, a renegade Mai-Mai commander operating in the Ruzizi plain, and 29 children associated with the 111th brigade of Colonel Nyakabaka. Further, large parts of Katanga, especially the northern and central areas, are still under the control of various Mai-Mai groups who remained outside the official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. On 12 May 2006, however, an important breakthrough was made when Kyungu Mutanga, a Mai-Mai leader known as Gédéon, operating in Katanga Province, surrendered in Mitwaba. He was accompanied by more than 150 combatants, 76 of whom were children. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 4,000 of his followers still remain at large, a significant number of them thought to be children.

35. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the former leader of the political and military movement, the Union des patriote congolais (UPC), was arrested by the Congolese authorities in March 2005 in connection with the assassination of nine United Nations peacekeepers. On 10 February 2006, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Lubanga for the war crime of "conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities". On 17 March 2006, Mr. Lubanga was transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. As a result of the disarmament and community reinsertion process in Ituri, the UPC-Kisembo (UPC-K) wing ceased to exist in the course of 2005. Further, in March 2006, Jean Pierre Biyoyo of the armed group known as Mudundu 40, was condemned to five years' imprisonment for the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of children and child recruitment committed in South Kivu in April 2004. However, he escaped from prison during the Bukavu Central Prison outbreak in early June 2006 and remains at large.

36. Reports have shown that Congolese refugee children in Rwanda have time and again been subjected to "voluntary" and forced recruitment by elements of the former Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD/G), and latterly, rebel groups loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda, and also transferred from Rwanda to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage in active combat.

37. The current operational framework for children's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration was launched by the Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion in cooperation with UNICEF, ILO and non-governmental organization partners in July 2004. As at 30 May 2006, 18,524 children had been released from the armed forces and groups through the official process; of that number, 16 per cent were girls. Thousands more, the majority of whom are girls, have escaped from fighting forces on their own and are returning to civilian life.

Developments in Haiti

38. A range of armed groups control territory in Haiti, in particular in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other cities such as Gonaïves, and are involved in political as well as criminal activity. Such groups fall under a number of categories such as:

(a) Popular Organizations, composed primarily of youth and children under 18 years, with strong links to political leaders and parties and used by them to political ends;

(b) Baz Armes, typically youth groups formed around sports or cultural activities and used for various purposes by political or criminal elements;

(c) Armed criminal gangs involved in organized crime, often also with links to political elements;

(d) Front de résistance (paramilitaries) composed of former military known as "armé cannibal" and civilians who toppled the Government of Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004 and contested the February 2006 elections as the Front de reconstruction nationale;

(e) Random organized criminal and political opposition groups comprised of excommunicated members of the Haitian police or criminal gangs. For example, on 7 July 2006, the United Nations documented four children killed and two maimed in Martissant, as a result of violence between the armed groups, Lame ti machet and Grand ravine.

39. Widespread and systematic rape and other sexual violence against girls are of particular concern. From interviews and investigations by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, it is estimated that up to 50 per cent of girls living in conflict zones such as Cité Soleil have been victims of rape or sexual violence, and in areas such as Carrefour, Martissant and Les Cayes the phenomenon of collective or "gang" rape is widespread. Also of grave concern are reported violations against children by the National Haitian Police, including the illegal detention of children and sexual abuse of female children while in custody, as well as the reports of execution and mutilation of street children during police operations early in 2006.

40. The establishment in September 2006 of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration represents a positive development, and it will be important to ensure that adequate provision is made for children in this framework.

Developments in Iraq

41. The current situation in Iraq has not allowed for the systematic collection of child protection information regarding the effects of violence and insurgency on children. In the current security context, it is also very difficult to determine the number of children who have been victims of and/or involved in the violence.

42. Many children have been killed and/or maimed as a result of large-scale suicide attacks or roadside bombs by various terrorist and criminal groups, or in military and security operations by the Iraqi police and Special Forces acting alone or in association with the Multinational Force in Iraq. On 15 March 2006, a raid by the Multinational Force in the outskirts of Al-Isshaqi District in Balad caused the death of a family of 11, including 5 children between 7 months and 5 years of age. In two separate incidents, on 19 March and 2 April 2006, 4 children were reported killed in fighting between the Multinational Force and the insurgents. In mid-March 2006, five Multinational Force soldiers were charged with the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl and the murder of her family, including her 5-year-old sister, in Mahmoudiyah, south of Baghdad.

43. The recent rise in sectarian violence, exacerbated by the bombing of the Al Askari shrine in Samarra, resulted in thousands of civilian casualties, many of whom were children. On 29 April 2006, 2 children were wounded when a mortar round landed on a home in Ta'Afar; on 26 June 2006, 10 children were killed in targeted explosions on two markets in Hilla and Ba'qubah; and on 2 August 2006, a bomb buried in the middle of a football pitch exploded, killing at least 12 people, most of whom were children. According to figures provided by the Ministry of Health, which include counts from hospitals in all governorates, excluding the three northern governorates of Kurdistan, from 1 January to 31 August 2006, 139 children were killed and 395 were wounded.

44. Of particular concern are reports of attacks involving children as combatants. On 1 November 2005, a boy said to be aged between 10 and 13 years carried out a suicide bombing targeting the police commander in the city of Kirkuk. Later in the same month, two boys aged 12 and 13 years, reportedly carried out attacks against patrols of the Multinational Force in Iraq in Fallujah and Hweejah.

45. Abductions of children by Iraqi armed groups related to the sectarian violence have increased significantly, in addition to the number of children abducted for ransom. A survey conducted by several local non-governmental organizations in Baghdad indicates that approximately 20,000 people have been kidnapped throughout the country since the beginning of 2006, 50 per cent of whom are women and children. In one case, the corpse of an abducted and sexually assaulted 12-year-old boy was found by the Iraqi police wrapped in a plastic bag even though his family had paid ransom. In another case, on 17 May 2006, the entire Iraqi Tae Kwan Do team composed of 15 children, between the ages of 12 and 15 years, from Al Sadr City were kidnapped near Ramadi. Recently, increasing concerns have been expressed by international and national non-governmental organizations that Iraqi children, both girls and boys, are being abducted and trafficked for purposes of

sexual exploitation. The rise of armed criminal groups has contributed to this phenomenon.

46. The ongoing violence and exposure to violence in schools and threats of abuse, kidnapping and/or injury by armed groups has contributed to non-attendance in schools. For example, on 26 March 2006, a schoolboy was killed while entering his school in Al Basrah. There have also been incidences where children have witnessed the killing of educators. In mid-2006, also in Al Basrah, the dean of the Al Basrah Abdullah Bin Om Kalthoum School was assassinated inside the school in front of his students. The targeting of teachers for ransom and violence has also seriously affected the delivery of education in schools. The national primary school drop-out rate is 3.6 per cent and the attendance rate is 76 per cent. However, this does not take into account the special arrangements between schools and parents where children are only present in school during final examinations.

47. The Government has, through the Commission of Child Care, begun to address the challenges confronting children in Iraq. The Commission has designated a committee, which has recommended that the Government sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Government of Iraq has repeatedly called upon the international community and all relevant United Nations agencies to offer their support and assistance in reinforcing their efforts in securing and protecting the welfare of children in Iraq.

Developments in Lebanon and Israel

48. The conflict involving Lebanon and Israel which began on 12 July 2006 has resulted in more than 1,109 Lebanese civilians killed and 4,405 injured, and 43 Israeli civilians killed, including 7 children, and 200 civilians injured. It is estimated that one third of the dead and wounded in Lebanon are children. For example, on the second day of hostilities, Israeli forces killed 38 civilians, among them 20 children, in four different attacks. Further, on 30 July, the Israeli air force bombed the village of Qana, in southern Lebanon, killing 28 civilians, including 16 children. On several occasions, Israeli forces attacked individual vehicles and convoys of civilians fleeing their villages after Israeli warnings that the villages would be bombed. For example, on 15 July, an Israeli air strike hit a civilian convoy fleeing the village of Marwahin, killing 21 people, including 14 children.

49. About 975,000 people, constituting approximately one quarter of the Lebanese population, were displaced during the hostilities. More than a third of these are reported to be children. As at 30 September 2006, 200,000 people had still not yet been able to return to their homes, while others had returned to their destroyed homes and villages. It is estimated that 30,000 homes were destroyed throughout the country, particularly in southern Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut.

50. During the conflict, indiscriminate Hezbollah rocket attacks in northern Israel killed seven children. A large number of civilians in northern Israel, including a significant proportion of children, were also displaced, having sought safety further south or spent lengthy amounts of time in crowded shelters. Further, the Hezbollah rocket attacks also damaged and destroyed at least 6,000 homes as well as over 30 schools and day-care centres. Four Israeli hospitals also incurred serious damage. On 18 July 2006, a rocket hit a hospital in Safed, northern Galilee, wounding eight people.

51. The war also caused extensive damage to schools and hospitals in Lebanon. In Baalbek, the main hospital, with an estimated population of 80,000, was reportedly severely damaged during ground and air military operations in north-east Lebanon. In southern Lebanon, Ghandour hospital in Nabatiyeh was also extensively damaged. All hospitals in the affected areas are also encountering serious shortages of drugs, fuel, electricity and water supplies. Rapid assessments of the losses in the education sector indicate that between 40 and 50 schools were totally destroyed, while around 300 schools need repair. For instance, on 20 July 2006, in Bint Jbeil, the Vocational School building, used to shelter hundreds of refugee families, was subjected to Israeli bombardment.

52. Children in Lebanon were also denied access to humanitarian assistance owing to an Israeli military blockade of Lebanon's borders, seaports, bombing of roads and Beirut's airport. Bombardments of electricity plants and water bores also resulted in power cuts and water shortages, increasing food and health insecurity of children particularly. The water systems in both urban and rural areas in southern Lebanon, Beqaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut were totally destroyed or partially damaged, with at least 1.7 million people, of whom up to 40 per cent were children, suffering either temporary breaks or full stoppage of water supply to their households. Further, in at least two cases, Israeli forces fired on humanitarian convoys and Red Cross ambulances.

53. Since the cessation of hostilities on 14 August until 28 September 2006, 12 civilians, including 2 children, were killed, as well as 98 civilians, including 39 children, injured by unexploded ordnances. The presence of a large number of unexploded munitions, including an estimated 1.2 million cluster bombs, 90 per cent of which were apparently fired in the last three days of the conflict, poses a special threat to children by heavily contaminating the destroyed infrastructure, school grounds and agricultural lands.

Developments in Liberia

54. The inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in January 2006 after winning pivotal elections in November 2005 has ushered in a new era of peace and justice for Liberia. President Johnson-Sirleaf took a landmark step when she formally requested Nigeria to surrender former President Charles Taylor to face trial. Former President Taylor has been transferred to The Hague, where he is awaiting trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the use of child soldiers, abduction and forced labour.

55. As of July 2006, there is no known group that uses or recruits child soldiers or former child soldiers. Although there are allegations of such activities in connection with the volatile political situation in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, these have not been confirmed by United Nations joint monitoring missions, subregional peacekeeping operations or United Nations operations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), however, has continued to facilitate the repatriation of foreign former child combatants. As of June 2006, a total of 55 former child combatants (11 Ivorians, 29 Guineans and 15 Sierra Leoneans) or children associated with the fighting forces have returned to their countries of origin. ICRC has also started to repatriate Liberian children associated with the fighting forces from countries neighbouring Liberia. The situation in neighbouring countries needs

particular attention and is subject to ongoing monitoring by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in close cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and other actors. UNMIL and ONUCI carry out coordinated border patrols to deter any attempts to recruit Liberians, while UNICEF and other child protection agencies have responded by putting in place a mechanism for prevention of re-recruitment through increasing reintegration programmes along the borders.

56. Between 2004 and 2005, UNMIL disarmament and demobilization programme has been relatively successful, resulting in 10,963 children demobilized. Of these, 77 per cent were boys and 23 per cent girls. On 13 April 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf signed executive order No. 4, which extended the mandate of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration for another year. UNICEF, UNMIL and other key partners are continuing to conduct follow-up monitoring of former child combatants through family and community-based interaction.

Developments in Myanmar

57. There are reliable reports of continued forcible recruitment and training of children for the Government armed forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) and non-State armed groups. However, owing to access limitations, the United Nations country team has not been able to systematically verify these allegations. Despite the difficulties in obtaining information, since the beginning of 2005, at least 12 detailed and credible allegations of forced recruitment of children aged between 12 and 17 into the national army were received by a United Nations partner. Myanmar's written law states that the Government army is all voluntary and the minimum age is 18. In early October 2004, the Government-established Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-age Children developed a plan of action, which included provisions for the discharge of children under 18 years from military service and their reintegration into their families and communities. The Committee was reinstituted on 3 February 2006, and has been stepping up efforts to promote awareness among the military establishments, training institutions and local communities. On various occasions over the past few months, UNICEF held discussions with the Government on the need to further develop and operationalize this national plan of action to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers, including a high-level meeting between the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director and the Secretary One of the State Peace and Development Council, who is also the Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-age Children. While concrete cooperation on this issue is yet to be fully forthcoming, the authorities propose to deepen their collaboration with UNICEF to review progress on the issue. The United Nations country team is aware of some cases of children being released from army service but is unable to verify the effectiveness of the Committee's plan of action or whether all children are being screened out of the Government armed forces.

58. Reports of abductions of children for forced labour or to serve in the armed forces by Government forces and non-State armed groups continue. However, the United Nations country team is hampered from accessing many areas controlled by both State and non-State actors. The country team has also been hindered from providing detailed information by a Government decision to prosecute parties who make false allegations of forced labour against the Government.

59. Access to communities in conflict zones and the special zones for humanitarian actors is a fundamental problem in Myanmar. Although assistance actors can work in many areas of the country, in some critical areas, where children are believed to be in very vulnerable situations, humanitarian assistance and protection is denied owing to Government restrictions on movement, allegedly for "security reasons". These areas include part of Kayin State and Bago Division, as well as parts of Shan and Kayah States, where civilians, including children, are being displaced owing to military activity. Access for humanitarian actors to some other non-conflict areas and ceasefire areas is also denied by the Government.

60. There are reports that the Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) continue to use and recruit children into the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karenni Army (KA), respectively. There are also allegations of recruitment from the Thai refugee camps. There is a long-standing practice that children go from the refugee camps across the border to the KNLA and KA for military training. Some children living in the refugee camps also provide logistical support to nearby military bases. In June 2006, leaders of KNU and KNPP assured United Nations representatives in Thailand that both armies had policies in place prohibiting the recruitment of children under 18 years although they conceded that those policies were not always followed by the local commanders. On 31 July 2006, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict received a letter from KNU stating that it would no longer use or recruit children; would monitor its units and take action to ensure that no children were within its ranks; and would cooperate and allow unhindered United Nations access to monitor and verify compliance to non-recruitment. Further, given the KNPP desire to be removed from the list, it has requested United Nations technical support on monitoring and enforcing the KNPP policy on non-recruitment. There are also reports of recruitment of child soldiers by the United Wa State Army.

61. Former child soldiers from the Government forces seeking protection in Thailand as army deserters face the threat of forcible return to Myanmar under a current practice by Thai authorities. The Thailand Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict has sought clarifications on this practice from Thai Government officials who stated they were not aware of the situation. However, the Thai Government has agreed to cooperate and address the problem of child soldiers through a common strategy with the Thailand Working Group.

62. There are also challenges in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, especially with respect to former child soldiers from the non-State armed groups who seek refuge in Thailand. No formal demobilization is possible and former child soldiers must be integrated into Thai refugee camps. Sending children back to their villages or families would put them and their families at risk of persecution.

Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel

63. The plight of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has become more precarious since the previous reporting period, as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensified, with hostilities focusing on the Gaza Strip in mid-2006. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, an estimated 93 children, 83 in Gaza and 10 in the West Bank, were killed by Israeli forces. Between 28 June and 30 September 2006, since the start of the Israeli

"Operation Summer Rains", United Nations agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory estimate that 289 Palestinians were killed, of whom 65 per cent were children, and over 1,261 injured in the Gaza Strip, of whom 189 were children, with 42 children killed in July alone. United Nations agencies have documented reports of children being killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces gunfire. For example, on 19 February 2006, a boy was injured by a bullet fired from the Balata Basic Girls' School, Nablus, which the Israel Defense Forces had occupied that morning. On 3 March 2006, during a large-scale Israel Defense Forces incursion into Camp No. 1 in Nablus, a boy was shot in the face and killed by Israeli sniper fire. Further, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that from 28 June to 22 August 2006, at least 4,809 Israeli artillery shells were fired into the Gaza Strip. Palestinian armed groups also launched a total of 367 rockets into Israel during the same period.

64. Two Israeli children were reported killed as a result of separate Palestinian attacks on civilian areas in March 2006. Additionally, communities living close to the Gaza Strip border, particularly the city of Sderot, endure regular, often daily, home-made rocket attacks by Palestinian militants. For example, in September 2006 alone, 45 Qassam rockets were launched into Sderot. These rockets damaged homes and schools, landed in public places frequented by children, such as playgrounds, and caused high levels of prolonged anxiety among children residing there.

65. As at 30 September 2006, 389 Palestinian children, including two 12-year-old boys, had been detained by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, often following transport of the children out of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and into Israel. A field survey of former child detainees, provided by a United Nations agency, estimated that 60 per cent of the children interviewed were reported to have been subjected to physical coercion or inducement to collaborate with Israeli authorities.

66. Recent incursions and shelling as well as direct military attacks have damaged schools and health facilities. Restricted access to health-care providers has resulted in the serious deterioration of health and health services and, consequently, the health status of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. For example, on 2 July 2006, in the West Bank, the Israel Defense Forces forcibly entered four Palestinian hospitals in search and detain operations, and, during one of the operations, in Nablus City, the hospital premises were used as cover by the Israel Defense Forces to fire live ammunition; while on 17 July 2006, Israel Defense Forces bulldozers demolished the boundary walls of the clinic operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Beit Hanun, Gaza. Direct air attacks on schools caused extensive damage and injury; shrapnel landed inside schools and school compounds during operations in the vicinity of schools; and Israel Defense Forces soldiers forcibly entered schools, causing destruction and detaining students and teachers in schools. For example, on 5 December 2005, during clashes between the Israel Defense Forces and Aida camp youths in the West Bank, the Israel Defense Forces used live rounds, tear gas and plastic-coated bullets in the vicinity of the UNRWA Basic Girls School, which resulted in tear gas inhalation by over 100 pupils in the first to third grades; while from 19 to 21 February 2006, the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli Border Police entered Balata refugee camp's Basic Girls School and used it for three days as a detention centre and firing position, causing extensive damage. In the Gaza Strip, from 19 to 21 July 2006, the military operations of the

Israel Defense Forces in Maghazi refugee camp left dozens of bullet holes in the Maghazi Elementary and Preparatory School buildings. Further, the prohibition on the entry of construction materials into Gaza has prevented repairs to schools damaged by the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli Air Force, restricting access of Palestinian children to education.

67. The Barrier and its associated regime, such as the Seam Zone permit system, and checkpoints, which restrict the freedom of movement of Palestinians, has deepened concerns about Palestinian access to medical services and schools within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. For example, the East Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria Hospital, which serves West Bank Palestinians, had the number of beds reduced owing to a decrease in patient numbers by 30 per cent, resulting from the Barrier and associated restrictions on the movement of people. Similarly, most students and teachers who are living behind the Barrier face long delays, resulting in regular missed classes and longer commutes to schools.

68. There is an increased exposure to unexploded ordnance owing to the recent military operations by the Israel Defense Forces. The number of Palestinians killed and injured, including children, more than doubled between January and April 2006, from 15 to 36 people. The most affected districts are Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin in the West Bank and northern Gaza.

Developments in Somalia

69. The Union of the Islamic Courts (ICU) seized control of Mogadishu on 4 June 2006, after four months of conflict with a coalition of warlords calling themselves the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT). At peace talks held in Khartoum on 22 June 2006, ICU and the Transitional Federal Government agreed on a number of principles, including a cessation of media and military campaigns, and the pursuit of dialogue and talks without preconditions in a framework of mutual recognition, which were subsequently reaffirmed during second round of talks, held from 2 to 4 September 2006.

70. Numerous cases of children being recruited by force by elements of ICU and ARPCT have been reported, both in Mogadishu and the Hiran region. ARPCT was very active in recruiting street children for its militia. ICU was reported to have recruited children from madrasas with promises of spiritual rewards for martyrdom, while there has also been widespread clan-based recruitment with families receiving financial incentives. As the United Nations country team only has limited presence in the country given the high level of insecurity, access to precise and updated information is therefore not readily available. After ICU took control of Mogadishu, reports continue that suggest that children between 10 and 16 years of age are being enrolled by force for military training by ICU in Dabble, near Kismayo, in Mogadishu and the Hiran region.

71. From March to June 2006, the heavy fighting between ICU and ARPCT was marked by grave human rights violations against children. Thousands of children, with their families, have been displaced from Mogadishu, and have been victims of shelling and gunfire in the capital. In May 2006, it was reported that 19 children had been wounded and 5 killed in the conflict.

72. In May 2006, armed Somali fighters from ARPCT occupied a major Mogadishu hospital run by ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent Society, in a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Humanitarian access in Somalia remains critical, in particular to the large vulnerable population in the southern and central region, including Mogadishu, Lower and Middle Shabelle and Hiran, which faces severe food shortages or are internally displaced. The political tension, which has escalated since June 2006 after ICU took control of these areas, continues to pose serious security and access concerns.

Developments in the Sudan

73. The various armed forces and groups that are parties to the conflict in the Sudan have a long history of using children for military purposes, and their complex links with the Government make it difficult to determine precisely the accountability for the violations of children's rights. In southern Sudan and Khartoum, responsibility for the recruitment and use of children rests with the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA, part of the Government of Southern Sudan), as well as their Joint Integrated Units, made up of both legal forces and militias known as other armed groups, such as the White Army. Additionally, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is also responsible for the recruitment and use of children. Children were recruited between May and July 2006, in Khartoum, Jonglei and Bahr al-Ghazal by the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA. For example, on 16 May 2006, the Sudan Armed Forces, SPLA and the new Joint Integrated Units were all reported to be involved in recruiting children in Nasser, Upper Nile State. In the same month, child soldiers were seen in a newly incorporated Sudan Armed Forces unit near Nasser, and there were reports of approximately 50 uniformed and armed SPLA soldiers aged between 14 and 16 years in the same area. In the same period, SPLA attacked the White Army in Motot, Jonglei State, and reportedly killed 113 White Army youth. The White Army, a livestock defence force linked to the Lou clan of the pastoralist Nuer ethnic group, is made up largely of males aged between 15 and 20 years, with some much younger. These forces were sometimes used by larger groups to carry out military tasks. Further, LRA units present in southern Sudan have recruited and used both Sudanese and Ugandan children.

74. In Darfur, SAF, Janjaweed militias, the faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) led by Minni Minawi that signed the Darfur Peace Agreement, other SLA factions that refused to sign the agreement, as well as paramilitary forces that are part of the Government, such as the camel police, are responsible for the recruitment and use of children. The Chadian opposition forces are also responsible for the recruitment and use of children. It is estimated that thousands of children are still associated with armed forces and groups in Darfur and were actively involved in the conflict between May and July 2006. The security situation, access limitations and the delayed implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement impede the ability to monitor the recruitment and use of children. Monitors have confirmed that the SLA (Minawi) commanders were forcibly recruiting boys in Gereida in May 2006, and that many child soldiers were also witnessed in Gereida at the end of June 2006. G19, a breakaway faction of SLA (Minawi), claimed in interviews at the beginning of June that SLA (Minawi) had abducted 108 children for use as soldiers on 10 May 2006. On 15 May 2006, interviews by United Nations staff of people displaced after Janjaweed attacks on villages near Kutum, Northern Darfur, confirmed that there

were many armed child soldiers among the Janjaweed militiamen who attacked them; and in June 2006, in Western Darfur there were further reports of many boys less than 18 years of age recruited into the camel police, a group used to mediate and control disputes between pastoralists and farmers. On 24 May 2006, a 17-year-old Tama boy was abducted from Geneina, southern Sudan, by Chadian opposition forces. This is indicative of the ongoing problem of abduction of youth from the Tama ethnic group for recruitment to the Chadian opposition.

75. In southern Sudan, 38 children were killed from May to July 2006. Some of them were reportedly participating in hostilities when they were killed. For example, in the fighting between the White Army and SPLA in Ulang and Akobo, Jonglei State, from 24 April to 15 May 2006, 33 children were killed. In Darfur, over 51 children were reported killed in the same period. However, these reports do not cover all of the areas of fighting in Darfur and many reports of civilian deaths are not age-disaggregated. On 5 July 2006, a breakaway faction of SLA led by Abdul Wahid reported that SLA (Minawi) forces had killed 16 children on their way to school in Dalil, Northern Darfur. There were also killings by Government allied militia in Darfur. For example, in Gereida, 150 children were missing after attacks on villages around Gereida in March 2006 by Government-allied militia. By the end of May 2006, 30 of those children had been found dead in different locations between Joughana and Gereida.

76. There have been numerous reports of abductions throughout the conflict in southern Sudan. Between May and July 2006, in Jonglei State, children were abducted; however it has been difficult to ascertain the exact numbers or responsible parties owing to access restrictions. In Darfur, there are abductions of children by Janjaweed militias, SLA (Minawi) and the Sudan Armed Forces. Girls are often abducted for short periods for sexual purposes. Many abductions are also linked to recruitment. Between May and July 2006, 18 cases of abduction were reported to the United Nations. For example, on 26 May 2006, six armed men in Sudan Armed Forces uniforms reportedly abducted a 13-year-old boy from Wadi Saleh, Western Darfur, while on 21 June 2006, Janjaweed militia abducted two boys in an attack on Abuderesa camp, Southern Darfur.

77. In Darfur, the practice of ethnically targeted sexual violence against girls and women continues, particularly in areas of displaced populations. Some 40 per cent of the victims have been under 18 years of age. Many of the attacks are carried out by uniformed men. Girls have been targeted in inter-ethnic conflicts as a deliberate form of humiliation of a group, and as a means of ethnic cleansing. For example, on 24 May 2006, a group of about 25 armed men in SLA uniforms threatened, beat and robbed six separate groups of women and girls in Hajar Jalanga, Western Darfur. One of the victims was a 15-year-old girl, who was sexually assaulted. Further, on 15 May 2006, Janjaweed militia attempted to rape women and girls displaced from villages near Kutum, Northern Darfur.

78. Humanitarian access worsened between May and July 2006 with the upsurge in violence that followed the peace agreement. On 6 June 2006, the rebel SLA (Wahid) faction reported that the Sudan Armed Forces checkpoint at Kass, Southern Darfur, had denied access to trucks carrying food into areas under their control. Further, in May 2006, three cases of hijacking of humanitarian convoys by armed men suspected to be affiliated to Government militias were reported in Western and Southern Darfur. From March to June 2006, the Government authorities imposed

access restrictions on United Nations agencies in eastern Sudan. Food assistance for about 110,000 refugees and internally displaced persons, 50 per cent of whom are children, was suspended in March but resumed in June 2006. The protection activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the refugee population in Kassala state were also seriously hampered during that period.

B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern

Developments in Chad

79. The overall security situation remains volatile in eastern Chad, especially with the ongoing fighting between the Government forces and the armed opposition, and the presence of Sudanese rebels of a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). There are reports of forced recruitment by SLA of children from the Breidjing, Treguine, Djabal and Goz Amir refugee camps in eastern Chad. The children are reportedly taken into the Sudan. From 17 to 19 March 2006, SLA rebels loyal to Commander Khamis Abdullah Abaker entered the Breidjing and Treguine camps. According to UNHCR, an estimated 4,700 refugees, some of them children, were recruited, some forcibly. All of the 4,700 refugees returned to the camp in weeks subsequent to the recruitment, except for 104, who as of 31 May 2006, were reported by refugee leaders and their families not to have returned to Breidjing and Treguine. According to the leaders, the missing refugees were either with the rebels or in hiding in neighbouring villages for fear of being targeted again by recruiters. Some children were reported to have been recruited in Goz Amir and Djabal camps as well, although many refugee youth interviewed by UNHCR indicated that they had joined SLA voluntarily. In Djabal and Goz Amir camps, teachers were among the recruiters. There is compelling evidence that some Chadian authorities were aware but not able or willing to prevent the recruitment taking place in these refugee camps. UNHCR, in coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, is looking into the possibility of strengthening security arrangements in and around refugee camps in Chad.

80. Although it is difficult to obtain the exact number of victims, hundreds of Chadian displaced people, including children, have been killed, raped and abducted in attacks on sites for internally displaced persons throughout eastern Chad since January 2006. Displaced women and girls are also targeted for sexual violence by members of armed groups, including the Janjaweed. It was reported to UNICEF that 33 women and girls from the Bildigue and Haraza tribes in the Koubigou internally displaced person site had been raped during the past four months.

Developments in Colombia

81. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) continues to recruit and use children. There is no information of recent child recruitment by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which is presently involved in talks with the Government. However, from November 2005 to September 2006, at least 56 children who had been demobilized through the Government demobilization programme declared that they had been part of ELN.

The United Nations country team believes that there are still children in ELN. The United Nations has received information that children also continue to be recruited by other right wing illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process begun in late 2004 with the Autodefensa Unidas de Colombia (AUC), such as the Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare and the Frente Cacique Pipinta.

82. Although there has been a marked decrease in the number of child abductions compared with recent years, the practice of abducting children continues among illegal armed groups. According to reliable sources, 137 children were abducted in 2005 and 2006 by illegal armed groups.

83. FARC-EP, ELN and other illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process also continue to be responsible for acts of sexual violence, including rape and torture, against girls. According to a report on Colombia prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), there has also been an increase in the number of allegations of acts of sexual violence against girls, in particular by members of the security forces.

84. The presence of landmines laid by FARC-EP and ELN and unexploded ordnance on school premises, in local water sources and on rural access roads represent a grave and growing concern, claiming many child victims. Some 30 per cent of civilian victims of anti-personnel landmines are children. Although there has been a reduction in comparison with previous years, forced displacement of civilians, 40 per cent of them children, has continued as a result of armed confrontations among parties to the conflict.

85. The Government has been relatively successful in its efforts with regard to the demobilization process of AUC. Since 12 December 2005, all 11 AUC groups have been demobilized in 17 collective demobilization sessions. However, there are concerns about the demobilized groups regrouping into criminal groups, as well as the emergence of new illegal armed actors or the strengthening of existing groups in areas already evacuated by demobilized groups. Since 1999, the National Institute for Family Welfare has undertaken a comprehensive programme to provide proper care to children and adolescents demobilized from illegal armed groups, which had involved 2,916 children from all groups up to June 2006 and 440 children from November 2005 to September 2006. Significant State resources have been applied to this programme, with progressive improvement in its quality. Child beneficiaries of this programme have largely been individually demobilized or captured, with the exception of approximately 300 formally handed over by AUC since the end of 2004 during the formal AUC demobilization process. Concerns in this regard have been expressed by the Procurador General de la Nación, considering that this illegal armed group is likely to have only released a portion of the children associated with its armed group.

Developments in Nepal

86. The change in Government in April 2006 and the subsequent ceasefire announcements by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) have halted military actions throughout the country. However, the peace process remains fragile. Reciprocal ceasefires have been declared without a formal ceasefire agreement being signed, and the issue of removing children from armed groups and their reintegration has not been the subject of agreement. Despite the efforts of child protection stakeholders, the 25-point code of conduct for the ceasefire signed by

both parties in May 2006 did not include any specific provisions for the protection of children.

87. There is increasingly strong evidence of the presence of children with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the military wing of CPN-M, and that they are used as combatants, informants and in various logistical capacities. While CPN-M repeatedly denies the recruitment and use of children for military purposes, UNICEF has documented reports confirming the presence of numerous child soldiers in PLA. Some 295 cases of recruitment, 39 per cent of them girls, have been documented, out of which 137 are still active since the ceasefire. Prior to the April 2006 ceasefire, there were special recruitment campaigns, such as the "one family, one member for the party", where children were recruited, forcibly or voluntarily. Some children who have escaped from CPN-M, are afraid to return to their homes for fear of re-recruitment by CPN-M and of arrest by the State security forces. There are also reports that clearly suggest that the CPN-M cultural groups are largely composed of children used as community mobilizers, to attract other children in the CPN-M affiliated movements. In April 2006, CPN-M released a statement of commitment to respect the rights of children, stating that CPN-M would not make use of children below the age of 18 years. However, to date, no substantial progress has been noted to prevent the use of children or to release children.

88. There is also cursory evidence of children being used as informants and messengers by the State security forces, to spy on and identify CPN-M cadres. However, more information is needed to determine if this is a systematic practice.

89. The State security forces and CPN-M have consistently failed to take all necessary measures to protect civilians during attacks on military targets. For example, in January 2006, in Nepalgunj, a 15-year-old girl was killed while she was inside her home as a result of indiscriminate firing by a police patrol. Further, investigations conducted by OHCHR into 13 military operations or clashes that took place between the end of the CPN-M unilateral ceasefire and the beginning of March 2006 showed that two children had been killed and six others injured as a result of aerial bombardments by the Royal Nepal Army. Since the ceasefire, there have been no reports of children killed or injured as a result of military operations by either party.

90. Mass abductions of thousands of individuals, mostly students and teachers, to participate in political demonstrations and mass rallies took place throughout the reporting period. National human rights organizations reported over 8,000 abductions, including 3,000 children between 3 September and 2 December 2005. Most of the children were released after short periods of political indoctrination. Since May 2006, there has been a significant decrease in abductions by CPN-M, although the party and its affiliated bodies continue to take civilians into captivity, including children, as part of their investigations into alleged offences as part of their "law enforcement" activities. For example, on 20 June 2006, in Nawalparasi, 6 children between 14 and 16 years of age were among 10 persons abducted and accused of theft.

91. There is widespread practice of forced closure of private and community schools by CPN-M and its student wing in all regions of Nepal, with a notable increase from September to December 2005 in the rural areas of the eastern region. The use of school buildings as army barracks or temporary shelters by both the

security forces and CPN-M, the destruction of schools during military operations and the actual killing of teachers and students impede children's access to education in Nepal. Schools were sometimes attacked when students were present, or attacks were initiated from schools by CPN-M, leading to further retaliation. For example, in January 2006, members of PLA in Syangja District who were being attacked by the Royal Nepalese Army took refuge in a school while 130 children and 5 teachers were present. During an aerial attack in March 2006 in Sindhupalchowk District, bombs were fired from helicopters by the Royal Nepalese Army in a civilian area with extensive damage caused to school buildings and classrooms. Since the ceasefire, military attacks in and around schools have stopped. However, some schools continue to be occupied by security forces and CPN-M in various parts of the country such as Khotand, Myagdi, Syangja, Tanahun, Bara, Kathmandu, Rukum, Banke and Sindhuli districts.

92. The newly established Government has publicly announced that all detainees held under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance have been released, including children detained because of their previous association with CPN-M. However, the United Nations country team believes that some children still remain in detention, under different charges such as detention for possession of arms and explosives, and murder.

Developments in the Philippines

93. Children continue to be targeted for recruitment, allegedly by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), despite the stated policy by CPP prohibiting the recruitment of anyone under 18 years of age into NPA. NPA claims that it assigns children to self-defence and non-combatant duties. From January 2005 to June 2006, the United Nations country team, in collaboration with child protection actors on the ground, documented 22 cases of children affiliated with NPA. During the last quarter of 2005, NPA allegedly stepped up recruitment in the Visayas provinces, including Negros Occidental. There have also been reports that children from indigenous communities in Northern Luzon and many parts of north-eastern and southern Mindanao have been joining NPA. In all these areas the actual number of children being recruited is difficult to determine.

94. The Abu Sayyaf Group still recruits children to fight, although the number of fighting forces is reported to have greatly diminished after the joint Philippine-United States military exercises in Basilan. There are also known cases of recruitment by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the rebel group in Mindanao, with whom peace talks are presently under way. It is estimated that 13 per cent of the 10,000 elements of MILF are children. The increased numbers of children joining MILF in Maguindanao Province is based on the assumption by MILF that the children would benefit from the socio-economic package offered in the event of the conclusion of the peace agreement. Despite sporadic fighting in Mindanao, the Government of the Philippines and MILF remain committed to continuing their talks with the hope of achieving sustainable peace in southern Philippines within a year. The positive state of the peace talks has also encouraged MILF to cooperate with civil society groups. Members of MILF have participated in two training programmes on child protection, international human rights and humanitarian law.

95. In some provinces such as Bohol and Negros Occidental, child recruitment is also reportedly being conducted by Government paramilitary forces such as the Citizen's Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU), although current reports do not indicate that recruitment is systematic in nature. In 2005, the Commission on Human Rights Region VI Office learned that two children had been recruited into the CAFGU in Murcia, Negros Occidental. It immediately called the attention of the commander of the 12th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the company commander sent the two under-aged recruits home. Such isolated reports of recruitment into CAFGU continue, despite a directive from AFP strictly setting the age of recruits at 18 years and above. The Armed Forces of the Philippines, however, continues to be vigilant in ensuring that no children are involved in CAFGU. The presence of independent authorities such as the Human Rights Council appears to provide protection against these isolated violations.

96. From November 2005 to May 2006, the Joint Secretariat of the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (Joint Monitoring Committee) and United Nations partners received reports and affidavits that documented 5 children killed and 45 children maimed in incidents related to armed conflict, and 9 children abducted, with some allegations against members of the Philippine Army and Scout Rangers. For example, on 25 November 2005, during a clash between the Philippine military and rebel forces in Sariaya, Quezon, a 15-year-old boy was injured, and on 31 January 2006, two 17-year-old boys were reported to have been taken by members of the 71st Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippine in Sta. Ines West, Tarlac Province, and were later found dead.

97. In response to the protection needs of children affected by armed conflict, the Government of the Philippines continues to implement a presidential order establishing a comprehensive programme for children involved in armed conflict, a framework that tasks relevant agencies of the Government, including the Department of National Defence and the Philippine National Police, on specific protection mandates for affected children.

Developments in Sri Lanka

98. The ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been seriously hampered by heightened levels of violence. Since early December 2005, violence has escalated dramatically, including military confrontations in the north and east; suicide bombings and claymore mine attacks in all parts of the country; and increased death and injury of civilians. On 29 May 2006, the Council of the European Union added LTTE to the Union's list of terrorist organizations.

99. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, UNICEF received reports of 513 children recruited or re-recruited by LTTE. These figures only represent the number of cases reported to UNICEF, and there were indications that the prevailing security situation might be deterring families from reporting cases. The overlap between children recorded on the UNICEF database and children who left LTTE (released, ran away or returned home) is approximately 36 per cent, suggesting that UNICEF figures reflect approximately one third of total cases of recruitment. On the basis of cases reported to UNICEF, the average age of child recruits during this period was 16 years. Some 68 per cent of recruits were boys and 32 per cent were

girls. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, most cases were reported from Kilinochchi district, with 26 per cent of the total number of children recruited or re-recruited occurring in the district; Batticaloa reported the second highest number of cases, with 23 per cent. During the same period, LTTE officially released 91 children and another 25 children are known to have escaped or run away. In most cases, LTTE did not follow the agreed release procedures as children were often transferred to a residential vocational training facility in Kilinochchi, or to the human rights body of LTTE, the Northeast Secretariat for Human Kights. UNICEF expressed concerns at this practice as children were placed in the institutions without parental consent, and there were verification difficulties owing to limitations in accessing the institutions.

100. Concerns have also been expressed regarding the civil defence training provided by LTTE to civilian communities throughout the north and east. UNICEF received reports of children as young as 16 years being included in the training programmes. School principals and teachers were also required to attend, affecting children's schooling. Reports were received from Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee and Kilinochchi districts of children not returning after attending the training programmes and it is suspected that they have been recruited.

101. As at 30 September 2006, UNICEF had received 128 reports of children being recruited by the Karuna faction. In the space of one week in mid-June, UNICEF received 30 reports alleging that children had been abducted by the Karuna faction in the areas of Santhiveli, Kiran, Mankerni, Valachchenai and Iruthayapuram (Manmunai North). Only boys were taken. All of the cases involved forced recruitment and abduction, in some cases by armed men who openly identified themselves as members of the Karuna faction.

102. During the period from 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission received 195 complaints of child abductions, including 110 complaints against LTTE, 79 complaints against a non-ceasefire agreement entity (the Karuna faction) and 6 complaints against the Government of Sri Lanka.

103. Bombing raids were conducted by the Sri Lankan air force against LTTE positions as part of retaliatory actions of a limited duration, causing death and injury to children. On 25 April 2006, following a suicide bomb attack on the army chief, General Sarath Fonseka, at army headquarters in Colombo, the Sri Lankan armed forces launched retaliatory strikes on LTTE positions around Sampur and Mutur in Trincomalee District. In this bombing raid, 4 children aged 4, 14, 15 and 16 years were killed and 14 children, ranging in age from 3 months to 17 years, were injured. On 14 August 2006, a bombing raid on a compound, which LTTE claimed was an orphanage and the Government claimed was a military training ground, killed a number of schoolgirls and injured many others.

104. In Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts, school attendance rates have decreased in many places because of fear of recruitment and the general security situation. Schools are also being occupied by internally displaced persons and damaged by air and artillery attacks by fighting forces. On 25 April 2006, a pre-school and the science laboratory of Chenaiyoor Central College were damaged by Government air and artillery strikes around Mutur in Trincomalee district. In Batticaloa, the Karuna faction opened a political office of the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) next door to St. Cecilia's Girls High School, exposing children to the danger of attack.

105. The escalation in violence since July 2006 has curtailed access to civilians affected by the conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka, restricting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and raising concerns about the security of humanitarian personnel, especially after the killing of 17 aid workers from the French non-governmental organization, Action Against Hunger, on 5 August 2006 in Trincomalee. Further, as at 30 September 2006, according to UNHCR, 209,672 people (56,739 families) had been displaced since 7 April 2006 owing to the rapid escalation of the conflict. The vast majority of the displacement has occurred since August 2006 in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, affecting thousands of children.

106. A task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) has been established in Sri Lanka. The inaugural meeting of the task force was held on 26 July 2006.

Developments in Uganda

107. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to abduct children for use as combatants and as sexual slaves in northern Uganda, although the total number of abductions has significantly reduced over time. The total number of abductions since January 2005 is estimated to have been approximately 1,500, significantly reducing to 222 over the first six months of 2006. For example, in May 2006, all 17 children reported to the United Nations country team to have been abducted were released within 48 hours. On 13 October 2005, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for LRA leader Joseph Kony and four others. The five are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, abduction, sexual enslavement, mutilation and forced recruitment of children. In May, June and July 2006, Mr. Kony met with southern Sudanese mediators attempting to broker an end to the hostilities between LRA and the Ugandan Government. The LRA leader reportedly said that he was committed to the peace process. Although President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni had given LRA leaders until 31 July 2006 to surrender and receive amnesty, on 15 July, Uganda's representatives agreed to send a delegation to meet with the LRA delegation in Juba, southern Sudan, and began negotiations. On 29 August 2006, a ceasefire between the Government of Uganda and LRA came into force. LRA has since begun to assemble in the Ri-Kwangba and Owiny Ki-Bul camps at the border with southern Sudan, and has agreed to release all women and children present in the group.

108. Although the Government of Uganda does not have an official policy to recruit children, children are present among the local defence units and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). There are also no signs of the release of the 1,128 children reported to have been mobilized into local defence units in late 2004 in Kitgum, Pader and parts of Teso. During the recent visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to Uganda, the Government agreed to enter into an action plan and to strengthen the implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks on the recruitment and use of children.

109. Children were among the 131 civilians reported to the United Nations country team as having been killed by LRA between August 2005 and June 2006 in ambushes on roads and attacks on persons found outside internally displaced person camps. For example, in January 2006, a boy was killed by LRA after he was

captured close to Amida camp in Kitgum district. Children have also been killed by UPDF soldiers and local defence units. For example, in February 2006, an 8-year-old girl was killed by soldiers in Ngomoromo in Kitgum district, and 4 children were among 10 civilians killed by local defence units at Ogwete camp in Lira district in May 2006.

110. There are also many reported cases of sexual exploitation and sexual violence against girls by Government military personnel in internally displaced person camp settings. For example, in January 2006, a UPDF soldier was reported to have been responsible for the rape of a 17-year-old girl outside Pagal camp in Gulu district and in February 2006 a 17-year-old soldier was arrested and charged with rape in Lira Palwo in Pader. The Government has made a commitment to putting in place enforceable guidelines and training of military personnel to prevent such cases from recurring.

111. In June 2006, a monitoring and reporting task force on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was inaugurated in Uganda, co-chaired by UNICEF and OHCHR.

C. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel

112. Building on the work of my Adviser on sexual exploitation and abuse, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations, efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel continue. The Secretariat, with the support of Member States, has developed a comprehensive strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse. Mandatory training for personnel and awareness-raising for the local population on sexual exploitation and abuse are key aspects of the prevention strategy. United Nations peacekeeping operations are reporting a high coverage of personnel trained with over 90 per cent of all personnel having received mandatory training in some missions.

113. To strengthen the Organization's ability to respond effectively to allegations of abuse, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations established a conduct and discipline team at its headquarters and in eight peace operations in November 2005. The headquarters team provides oversight on the state of conduct and discipline for all categories of United Nations personnel in all peace operations led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Conduct and discipline teams in peace operations provide advice to the head of mission on preventing and responding to all conduct and discipline issues involving all categories of personnel in the mission. Mission conduct and discipline teams play a key role in receiving allegations of misconduct, tracking misconduct cases and assisting the mission to develop and implement measures to prevent misconduct, enforce United Nations standards of conduct and provide remedial action to victims. For instance, child protection advisers assist the work of the mission team by incorporating messages on sexual exploitation and abuse in training tools on the rights of the child for contingent personnel, directing allegations of sexual misconduct from child rights and human rights organizations to the mission team and helping disseminate information on United Nations standards of conduct through their civil society contacts. Further, to provide support and assistance to victims of abuse by United Nations personnel, I

issued a draft policy statement and comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff. This policy provides for victim advocacy, referral systems and funding. It should be highlighted that the responsibility of troop-contributing countries to discipline their peacekeeping personnel is critical in this regard.

114. It is unfortunate that despite these efforts abuses continue. From 1 January 2004 to 18 August 2006, investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving 313 United Nations peacekeeping personnel resulted in 17 civilians being dismissed or their contracts not renewed and 17 police and 141 military peacekeeping personnel being repatriated on disciplinary grounds. As of 18 August 2006, 85 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving civilian (29), police (8) and military peacekeeping personnel (48) were reported to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2006, and these cases are pending investigation.

115. Further, on 18 August 2006, the international media reported on allegations of a prostitution ring run by soldiers, and involving young girls, some as young as 15-years old, in the South Kivu area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is believed that some of these soldiers are United Nations peacekeepers. Investigations into these allegations are currently being conducted and disciplinary action will be taken against any United Nations personnel implicated.

V. Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism

116. In its resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council called for the implementation, within existing resources, of the monitoring and reporting mechanism outlined in my report (S/2005/72). It also requested an independent review of the mechanism to be reported to the Security Council by 31 July 2006. I have requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services to carry out this independent review. The review is ongoing and key partners are fully cooperating with the exercise. I will present the results of this review to the Security Council in November 2006.

117. In the year since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), steady progress has been made in establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the seven situations that were designated as priorities for the first phase of implementation, namely, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, the Sudan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The country-level task forces received significant guidance from United Nations Headquarters to facilitate implementation, including reporting templates, definitions of grave violations and other relevant technical materials. In addition, several country visits have been undertaken to brief and facilitate the start up of the work of these task forces. I have sent information from the monitoring and reporting mechanism through reports to the Security Council on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan; and through the United Nations Secretariat "horizontal" reports on situations of concern to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

118. The Working Group has been established and has held five formal meetings. The terms of reference of the Working Group and its workplan for 2006 were

adopted in May 2006. To date, the Working Group has considered reports on situations of concern in relation to children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Sudan, and has issued recommendations with respect to the report of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Council and other bodies within the United Nations system.

119. There have been significant challenges in undertaking such a complex multi-stakeholder initiative. These include serious difficulties of safe and unhindered access of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel for monitoring and reporting; ensuring buy-in and clarity on division of labour and complementarity of roles of partners within and outside the United Nations system; adequate levels of child protection expertise within United Nations entities and other partners; and adequate level of resources for sustainable long-term response and intervention programmes for children affected by armed conflict. Although country specificities, capacities and expectations of major stakeholders vary at country level, all possible efforts have been made to ensure provision of reliable, accurate and objective monitoring reports.

VI. Information on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plans

120. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), calling for parties to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and reaffirmed by the Council in resolution 1612 (2005) calling for the parties concerned to develop and implement action plans without delay in close collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams, action plans and/or advocacy efforts have been made with the parties in the following situations of armed conflict.

121. In Burundi, there have been no official negotiations with FNL to halt the use and recruitment of children. However, the ONUB presented a document to FNL during the ceasefire negotiations in June 2006, requesting FNL to prioritize the demobilization of children. FNL has not signed the document. Further, in a note verbale dated 9 August 2006, ONUB requested the Government to release former FNL child combatants from the Randa detention centre, for immediate demobilization. As of the beginning of September 2006, the child combatants were still being held in Randa. Discussions with the Government continue on the need to release these children into the reintegration programme.

122. In Côte d'Ivoire, on 26 November 2005, FAFN committed to an action plan to handover all demobilized children to UNICEF and to prevent the recruitment and association of children with its forces. FAFN also agreed to designate focal points for the identification and demobilization of children in the camps as well as approve unimpeded access to camps, checkpoints and military barracks to verify the presence of children. FAFN has agreed with UNICEF to establish an independent verification commission to ensure compliance with the action plan. The work of the verification commission will be complemented by the regular monitoring activities of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. So far, FAFN has made all efforts to comply. Additional resources are required for the rehabilitation and reintegration programme for demobilized children. The other militia groups, FLGO, MILOCI,

APWé and UPRGO, with the exception of the armed civil defence groups in the west and GPP in Abidjan, have also engaged in dialogue with the United Nations, for the establishment of an action plan to end the use of child soldiers in government-controlled territories. On 14 September 2006, all four militia groups signed a regional action plan to end the use and recruitment of children. They have agreed to release all children within their ranks; cooperate with the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme on children's issues; take specific measures to prevent recruitment of children, define time-bound benchmarks for measuring progress and compliance, and to allow unhindered access for monitoring and verification of the action plan.

123. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF and MONUC met with FARDC in March 2005 in order to raise issues of the recruitment and use of children. Following this meeting, all regional commanders of FARDC were given instructions prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, stating that perpetrators would be prosecuted. FARDC military tribunals have also begun prosecuting cases of child recruitment by FARDC officers. Further, dialogue with militia leaders aimed at completing the withdrawal of all children present in military groups continue in the context of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan.

124. The submission of my country report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 13 June 2006 (S/2006/389) was received positively by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Working Group made recommendations to the Security Council to consider targeted sanctions on the leaders of the Mouvement Révoluntionaire du Congo (MRC) for repeated violations of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict; and have referred rebel leader Laurent Nkunda to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations country task force, is currently engaged with its national institutions in implementing the recommendations outlined in the country report, a progress to be commended.

125. In Nepal, in June 2006, the United Nations country team met with the Government and CPN-M and requested the parties to nominate focal points to discuss monitoring and reporting on grave violations affecting children within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The nomination of focal points is still pending. To date, CPN-M has yet to engage in substantive dialogue on the release of children associated with their forces.

126. In Sri Lanka, in June 2003, the Government of Sri Lanka and LTTE endorsed an agreement committing to an action plan for children affected by war in the north east of Sri Lanka. Under the action plan, LTTE committed to ceasing all recruitment of children and to releasing all children already in its ranks. In a meeting between UNICEF and LTTE in January 2006, it was agreed that both parties would meet regularly to discuss technical issues about the release of children and measures to stop recruitment. Dialogue continues to take place between UNICEF and LTTE through this forum. LTTE also announced the formation of a child protection unit. However, a residual caseload of 1,464 children remain unaddressed as at 30 June 2006. In June 2006, following reports of recruitment by the Karuna group, UNICEF

met with the political wing of the Karuna faction, TMVP, to remind it of its obligations not to recruit children and to seek the release of underage recruits. This dialogue is ongoing, but the Karuna faction has yet to provide concrete commitments.

127. In Somalia, as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the United Nations country team met with ICU, and will include the issues of child recruitment in its further dialogues with both sides to the conflict. UNICEF and its partners have just finalized a five-year strategy for advocacy and intervention for children associated with armed groups, which will guide future interaction with those responsible for involving children in armed conflict. To date, no concrete interventions on this issue have been made with the existing political entities.

128. In southern Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) child protection advisers have been using the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee and its seven subsidiary area joint military committees to engage the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA in dialogue on abuses against children and difficulties in releasing children from military units, in particular those newly incorporated from other armed groups. In Darfur, since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, UNICEF and UNMIS have been in dialogue with SLA (Minawi) and SLA (Wahid) regarding the need to end recruitment of children and to release children who are associated with those armed groups. SLA (Minawi) committed itself to facilitate the work of UNICEF and provide its full support in releasing and reintegrating children associated with its forces. However, recent internal fighting within the SLA (Minawi) faction has hindered follow-up action. It is important to note that the ability of the United Nations to initiate and engage in dialogue with armed groups on grave child rights violations is often hindered by access restrictions and fluid chains of command in some groups.

129. In Uganda, the recent mission of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict resulted in: (a) the Government agreeing to work with UNICEF and OHCHR to set up an action plan for the prevention of recruitment; (b) the removal of child combatants in local defence units and UPDF; (c) the strengthening of measures by the Government with regard to taking disciplinary action against armed forces personnel who knowingly recruit children in the local defence units and UPDF, as well as strengthening existing procedures for access of designated personnel from UNICEF, OHCHR and the Uganda Human Rights Commission to enter military installations for the purposes of verifying presence of children in the armed forces; and (d) the Government undertaking to seriously consider enacting criminal legislation to prevent and punish civilian abettors of child recruitment.

VII. Information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers

130. The Security Council has repeatedly called upon me to ensure that the need for and the number and roles of child protection advisers are systematically assessed during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation. In this regard, in resolution 1612 (2005), paragraph 20 (d), the Council requested me to include information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers in my report on the implementation of the resolution. Pursuant to that request, the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is undertaking

a study of the child protection experience in peace operations. This study seeks to address the following specific questions: (a) are child protection advisers effective?; (b) in what ways have they made an impact?; and (c) how can the overall impact of child protection advisers be strengthened?

131. Preliminary findings from the study indicate that child protection advisers are effective in two major areas: in gathering information for monitoring and reporting purposes; and in mainstreaming child protection within missions and through mission training programmes. Mainstreaming child protection within the mission reinforces the monitoring and reporting aspect by creating a knowledge base and expertise on child protection. Serving and former child protection advisers who participated in the study, as well as child protection partners, highlighted monitoring and reporting as an area where child protection advisers have been effective and have made a positive impact. The increased awareness of children and armed conflict issues among United Nations civilian police, military observers and the military, all of whom operate on a regular basis in front-line areas, where children are found in harm's way, greatly enhances the work of child protection advisers by providing an extended network of available resources to monitor violations.

132. The findings also indicate that there is room for improvement in a number of areas. First is the overall understanding of the child protection adviser function within missions, especially among senior mission leadership. There is also a tendency for other civilian personnel to see child protection advisers as providers of humanitarian assistance rather than advocates for improved policy and approaches towards children and armed conflict. Second is the placement of the child protection function within the "pillars" of the mission structure, concluding that the child protection function is often not optimally located within that structure; the actual location of the child protection function tends to vary across missions, with child protection advisers sometimes subsumed within other sections, pointing to a lack of a clear Department of Peacekeeping Operations policy consensus about where child protection advisers should be located. Individual child protection advisers have on certain occasions interpreted their mandate broadly, sometimes leading to a lack of common understanding with key partners. This should be addressed in a structured way with all major stakeholders as a priority. Third is the need for stronger child protection policy support within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the headquarters level.

133. The study on child protection experience in peace operations is expected to be completed within the next two months, and will provide a comprehensive assessment of the impact and effectiveness of child protection advisers as well as a number of specific recommendations.

VIII. Recommendations

134. **I recommend that the Security Council consider expanding its focus and give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern; and to give equal weight to all categories of grave violations beyond the recruitment and use of child soldiers to include the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access for children.**

135. **I encourage the Security Council to continue to call upon parties to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and to expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern.**

136. **I call upon donors to ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to national Governments, the United Nations and partners, for the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces, and to develop relevant and effective programmatic action that reinforces the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for children, ensuring long-term sustainability and success of such interventions.**

137. **I welcome the Security Council's continuing consideration of effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in armed conflict in defiance of Council resolutions.**

138. **I encourage State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to take measures to support the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children for armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, in particular by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits by law the recruitment of children under the age of 15 years into armed forces/groups and their direct participation in hostilities.**

IX. Annexed lists

139. The present report contains two annexes.[2] Annex I lists parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II lists parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

140. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the annexed lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

Notes

[1] Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

[2] The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

Annex I

List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children

Parties in Burundi

Parti de libération du Peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL) — Agathon Rwasa

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.

Parties in Côte d'Ivoire

1. Armed militia groups affiliated with the Presidential camp
   (a) Front de libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO)
   (b) Mouvement ivoirien de libération ouest de Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI)
   (c) Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé)
   (d) Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO)
2. Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (FAFN)

This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence in the reporting period.

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

This party has also been responsible for the abductions of children in the reporting period.

3. Front nationaliste et integrationaliste (FNI)
4. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga who have not integrated into FARDC
5. Non-integrated FARDC elements loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda

This party has also been responsible for the abductions of children in the reporting period.

Parties in Myanmar

1. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)

2. Karenni Army (KA)

3. Tatmadaw Kyi

4. United Wa State Army

Parties in Somalia

1. Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against hospitals in the reporting period.

2. Union of the Islamic Courts (ICU)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.

Parties in the Sudan

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

(a) Darfur Government supporting militias, also called Janjaweed

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

(b) Police forces (camel police)

(c) Sudan Armed Forces

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions of children and the denial of humanitarian access in the reporting period.

2. Former rebel parties who have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement

Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) (Minawi)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

3. Parties under the control of the Government of Southern Sudan

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.

4. Parties under the control of both the Government of the Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan

Joint Integrated Units of the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA

5. Groups of tribally linked armed civilians involved in inter-communal fight or confrontations with parties

The White Army (Lou Nuer)

This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children the reporting period

6. Other groups active in Sudanese territory

(a) Chadian opposition forces

(b) Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Annex II

List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children

Parties in Chad

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)

Parties in Colombia

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

This party has also been responsible for abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

This party has also been responsible for abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

3. Illegal armed groups not participating in the demobilization process

   (a) Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare

   (b) Frente Cacique Pipinta

These parties have also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

Parties in Nepal

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)

This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming, and abducting children and attacks against schools and hospitals in the reporting period.

Parties in the Philippines

1. Abu Sayyaf Group
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
3. New People's Army (NPA)

Parties in Sri Lanka

1. Karuna faction

This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.

2. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.

Parties in Uganda

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

2. Government armed forces and defence units

(a) Local defence units

This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming children in the reporting period.

(b) Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)

This party has also been responsible for the killing, maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.